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ABSTRACT

This article presents an example of a university College of Education faculty becoming involved with the school society which it serves. The results of a needs assessment, conducted by inservice teacher education directors in six districts in Florida, showed a need for workshops on curricular innovations, particularly individualized instruction. In response to this need, workshops were developed emphasizing humanization and individualization in the classroom environment. Workshop procedures are described and evaluative information relating to participants' attitudes and opinions is included. (Author/STS)

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WORKSHOP ON INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION FOR IN-SERVICE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

by

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WORKSHOP ON INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION
FOR IN-SERVICE ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Problem

Throughout the country the Colleges of Education must become active participants in developing meaningful teacher in-service programs. These programs are necessary in order to create and facilitate better liaison with the community being served. The very survival of educational faculties depends on their ability to develop and implement new and meaningful in-service programs. A sincere commitment is needed by the College of Education faculties to increase and enhance their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the school communities they serve.

With the advent of the Teacher Center Act of 1974 the Florida State Legislature provided the means for each county school district to take over and implement in-service programs for their teachers. However, without the immediate and innovative changes by the College of Education faculty, the roles of the colleges as an educational force in the community will be diluted.

According to the Teacher Center Act, "Such teacher training programs should be funded through annual appropriations in the Florida Education Finance Program to each school district at the rate of $5.00 per FTE (full-time equivalency) per student in each district or such higher rate as may be established annually by the legislature. Funds appropriated to school districts pursuant to this section shall be used exclusively for in-service personnel training programs meeting criteria established by

the Department of Education for in-service master plans. This act should take effect July 1, 1974." CSHB 369.5

A second important factor that dictates a need for change is the declining birthrate, especially in certain areas of Florida. The declining birthrate has made a decided impact on the elementary school enrollment, creating a surplus of elementary teachers. If this trend continues, pre-service education in Colleges of Education will have to sharply curtail their existing programs. Our society views the college degree with different eyes, and as a result colleges and universities are looking for new clientel. All of this rhetoric is merely to state the case: university faculty must become more involved with the school society they serve. Robert Hutchins states, "A contemporary scholar has no difficulty in saying that a university must be a service station for its community and at the same time an international organization." (1968) Therefore, it makes sense to have a more active involvement between the university faculty and the public school classrooms.

It is from this direct involvement with the classroom teacher and students that relevancy and creditability can be incorporated into any College of Education in-service program of the future.

Procedures

To demonstrate the changing needs of the school districts in the Florida Technological University service area, in-service directors in six districts conducted a needs assessment to determine the type of in-service programs most wanted by teachers. Their first priority was a request for meaningful workshops on curricular innovations, particularly individualizing instruction.

The teachers wanted ideas not idealism, training not trivia, learning not lectures, and planning not platitudes. With this mandate from the classroom teachers, this investigator began preparing instructional workshops which included strategies appropriate for and relevant to the classroom.

The investigator visited a hundred or more classrooms during a school year; this afforded the opportunity to piece together a composite of ideas and resources from teachers who were currently operating within classroom environments which utilized classroom concepts beneficial to the individual student.

Hundreds of photographic slides were made of all types of learning activities in all types of classroom settings, traditional to non-traditional teaching. Photographic slides were made with the thought in mind of sharing ideas and techniques that were working for other teachers and children. Individualizing environments created by teachers who cared and where students were not bored provided models for subsequent workshops. There is an acute rareness of these situations in our public schools. Many children sit in straight rows watching and listening to the teacher who does most of the talking. Children from first grade and up are shifted or rotated from teacher to teacher on 30, 45, or 50 minute schedules for different areas of the curriculum. At the same time, these same teachers and principals wonder why the children are inattentive and exhibit disruptive behavior.

To develop strategies for implementing creative and relevant workshops, the following procedures evolved from thirty workshops which were conducted for over a thousand teachers in individual schools of four school districts

in the Central Florida area (Brevard, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole).

Procedure 1. A readiness activity was given to the teachers to set the state for the activities that would follow. The readiness activity was a picture of a little boy, and the participants were given large blunt crayons with which to color in the appropriate places as they received instructions from the workshop leader. The participants had to use the opposite hand they normally used for writing. They were continually hurried and hasseled to raise their individual frustration level to develop antagonism, just as it would develop in a classroom where teachers expect too much from their children too fast. This awareness exercise helped teachers realize the frustrations experienced by their students when they too are hasseled by the teacher.

Procedure 2. A multi-media audio-visual presentation of a "Little Boy" is shown. It has the underlying theme of how a teacher stifles the creativity of a little boy by sterile, staid, stagnant teaching methods and environment.

Procedure 3. A discussion was conducted on how the workshop leader as an elementary classroom teacher humanized and individualized the instruction in an elementary classroom of low socio-economic students housed in an egg-crate room located in a community that was against any changes. By doing this, an atmosphere of creditability with the teachers was established so that a feeling of "Hey! She's been there" was generated, which is important if teachers are going to tune in and not tune out.

Procedure 4. A self-awareness technique from Wittmer and Myrick (1974) the "grocery bag" was demonstrated to teachers as a means to develop the self-awareness of their students in a classroom.

Procedure 5. Strategies from Sidney Simon (1972) Values Clarification were used, such as Values Voting, Twenty Things You Love To Do, and a Values Continuum. Glasser's (1969) classroom meeting concept was discussed to help teachers create a humane, non-threatening environment.

Procedure 6. A multi-media presentation of the Warm Fuzzies (1971) story and how it can be incorporated in the learning processes of children was shown to all teachers.

Procedure 7. The techniques of brainstorming were introduced as a means of teaching problem solving to students.

Procedure 8. An audio-visual presentation of a song by Ray Stevens (1970) "Everything is Beautiful" was shown to the group. This song lends itself to establishing a climate of a humanizing environment for all children.

Procedure 9. An audio-visual presentation by the workshop leader using examples of individualizing instruction through the use of learning centers. Pictures were made by the investigator in a myriad of classroom settings from egg-crate rooms to open expanses in buildings, from kindergarten to the sixth grade. The visuals included cartoons intended to instill in the viewer the idea of incorporating a humanizing atmosphere in their classrooms. Interspersed throughout are visuals of a "ditto dragon" (a cartoon character) which is a ditto machine that looks like a dragon, a dragon that devours the ambition of children doomed to work ditto sheets all day.

Procedure 10. A sample learning activity package was given to each participant designed to assist teachers in planning individual activities for their students.

Procedure 11. The teachers maneuver through and actually manipulate learning centers that were constructed by the investigator. As the teachers go through the centers the workshop leader demonstrates and explains the organizational structure of the centers, the management system, what happens at each center, the time required to experience each center, how the materials were made, and the approximate cost of each center.

Results

Each subsequent workshop was improved through feedback from the previous workshop. This feedback was supplied from each district by means of an existing in-service evaluation form. These evaluation instruments provided salient data on the effectiveness of the workshops. The teachers' responses from each district were compiled, tallied, and are presented in the following tables.

Table I represents the two workshops given in the Brevard School District with sixty-eight teachers responding. The Brevard In-Service Instrument consists of eight categories. The category rated highest was "the leader conducted this in-service with enthusiasm". The category that was rated lowest was "the physical facilities were appropriate for the activity".

The Osceola County In-Service Instrument in Table II portrays 275 teacher responses and 75% rated the workshops as very effective, and 25% effective, thereby illustrating that the majority of the teachers felt the workshops were able to meet their needs.

Table III, Seminole County In-Service Training Evaluations, exhibits the responses of 195 teachers from seven elementary schools. The categories

receiving 98% or the highest ratings were number 2, "was consultant knowledgeable" and number 3, "was information received meaningful to you". The lowest rating of 38% was number 5 in the category of "was information new to you".

The Orange County In-Service Evaluation Instrument represented the responses from 325 teachers. The workshops were held in thirteen elementary schools within the school district. The category receiving the highest rating (98%) was number 6, "effectiveness of instructors and/or consultants". The lowest rating (90%) was number 1, "organization". Overall evaluation of the Orange County workshops were rated high (98%).

Perhaps it would be difficult to assess the effectiveness of the workshops from the four in-service evaluations since they are dissimilar. There were 28 workshops given to 863 teachers in four school districts where evaluations were made by the in-service representatives. For Brevard teachers the workshops overall evaluations were 94% or "to a high degree". Orange County teachers gave a 98% excellent rating for the "overall evaluation of this activity". Seminole teachers responded with 96%, above average, for rating the component or workshop overall. The Osceola teachers responded with 72%, "very effective".

The data substantiates the conclusion that of 863 teachers in four school districts the workshops were rated high by 90% of participants, therefore, illustrating that the workshops were relevant and provided meaningful experiences for public school elementary classroom teachers.

TABLE I

BREVARD COUNTY SCHOOLS
OPINION SURVEY OF IN-SERVICE PARTICIPANTS
Selected Criteria

X in the block following each criteria that best expresses how you feel about this staff development experience.	To a very high degree	To above average degree	To below average degree	Not applicable	Total	Median
1. The methods and/or media used to present this in-service were effective.	94%	6%	-	-	68	3.9
2. The objectives of this in-service were clarified and discussed.	91	9			68	3.9
3. There was agreement between announced objectives and what actually took place.	88	12			68	3.9
4. This in-service met my immediate and/or my long range needs.	91	9			68	3.9
5. The physical facilities were appropriate for the activity.	79	15	2	2	68	3.8
6. The leaders conducted this in-service with enthusiasm.	97	3			68	3.9
7. The participants appeared to feel free to interact with the leaders or other participants.	94	6			68	3.9
8. It was evident that there was planning and preparation for this in-service.	97	3			68	3.9

The highest possible rating is 4.0

N=68

TABLE II

OSCEOLA COUNTY
EVALUATION FOR IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP

Consultant: P. Manning

Component: Individualizing Instruction N=275

5 Very Effective	4 Effective	3 Adequate	2 Ineffective	1 Very Ineffective
72%	25%	2%	1%	

Comments Below

What did you like about the workshops?

- Good ideas to use with my class.
- Consultant was very helpful and cooperative.
- Excellent - great senses of humor.
- Very effective.
- She gave us tangible examples on how to individualize. We need examples not lectures.
- Good materials - open discussion.
- Variety of materials and original ideas.
- Enjoyed both instructor and presentation.
- I found it to be one of the most helpful workshops I've attended.
- Instructor knew her subject - didn't waste time.
- Provided many "on hands" ideas for individualizing in the classroom.
- Attractive displays. She was a dynamic speaker. Open discussion.
- The "hands on" activities and great ideas!

Suggestions for Improvements.

- No improvements needed on this in-service workshop.
- More workshops like it for specific areas.
- I didn't like the seating arrangements.
- Longer in time.
- More time for browsing and feedback.
- Making some materials during workshop hours.

TABLE III

SEMINOLE COUNTY
IN-SERVICE TRAINING EVALUATION

Component: Learning Centers Objective: Individualization

Instructor: Pat Manning Date: 1974-1977

Affiliation of Instructor: Florida Technological University

KEY: 0 - Negligible 1 - Low 2 - Medium 3 - High N=195

I. In your opinion, to what degree:

	0	1	2	3
1. Would this component be considered worthwhile?			4%	96%
2. Was consultant(s) knowledgeable?			2%	98%
3. Was information received meaningful to you?			2%	98%
4. Was objective effectively reached?			15%	85%
5. Was information received new to you?		7%	37%	38%
6. (If information was not new.) Did information warrant repetition for review or emphasis?			15%	85%
7. (If foreseeable.) Will your participation in this component bring about a behavioral change (a) in you?			50%	50%
(b) in students for which you are responsible?			50%	50%

II. Would you recommend that this component be expanded and continued? Yes = 100%
If no, please explain: No =

_____

III. In terms of updating knowledge or improving skills or competencies, how do you rate this component overall? (Circle one)

Above Average = 96% Average = 4% Below Average =

TABLE III

(Continued)

IV. Additional comments:

1. One of the best things yet!
2. Let's do it again soon! The workshop time was so great for all of us and our kids.
3. Most worthwhile; would like to see some early dismissal days devoted to making more of these centers.
4. The presentation - excellent. I brought back many ideas for classroom use.
5. Extremely worthwhile.
6. Very informative; well prepared.
7. Liked the "hands-on" approach.
8. Love her "hands-on" approach, eagerness to help and consideration in letting teachers use her materials to copy.
9. Let's do it again soon! The workshop time was so great for all of us.

TABLE IV

ORANGE COUNTY IN-SERVICE EVALUATION

ACTIVITY TITLE Individualizing Instruction COMPONENT # _____

DATE 1975-1977

PLEASE CHECK:

POSITION

90%	01%	9%	
Instructional	Non-Instructional	Adminis. Superv.	Other

LEVEL OF INSTRUCTION

100%			
Elem.	Second.	Adult	Other

EXPERIENCE

02%	10%	60%	28%
New 0 Yrs.	1-3 Yrs.	3-9 Yrs.	10 Yrs. Plus

DEGREE

	80%	17%	03%
H.S.	B.S. B.A.	M.S. M.A.	Masters Plus

Please rate the following items based on your participation N=325

	Excellent 5	High 4	Average 3	Low 2	Poor 1
1. ORGANIZATION?	90%	5%	5%		
2. OBJECTIVES ADEQUATELY DEFINED?	93%	5%	2%		
3. OBJECTIVES ACCOMPLISHED?	91%	6%	3%		
4. PACE OF ACTIVITIES?	96%	4%			
5. CLARITY OF PRESENTATIONS?	93%	3%	3%	1%	
6. EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTORS AND/OR CONSULTANTS?	98%	1%	1%		
7. INTEREST LEVEL?	96%	2%	1%	1%	
8. PRACTICALITY?	95%	1%	1%	3%	
9. USEFULNESS?	92%	3%	3%	2%	
10. OVERALL EVALUATION OF THIS ACTIVITY?	98%	1%	1%		

**If you wish to make any comments regarding this in-service activity, please use the opposite side of this page.

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5. Ray Stevens, Everything is Beautiful, Tenn: Ahab Music Co., Inc., 1970.

6. Joe Wittmer and Robert D. Myrick, Facilitative Teaching: Theory and Practice, Calif: Goodyear Pub. Co., Inc., 1974, p. 134.